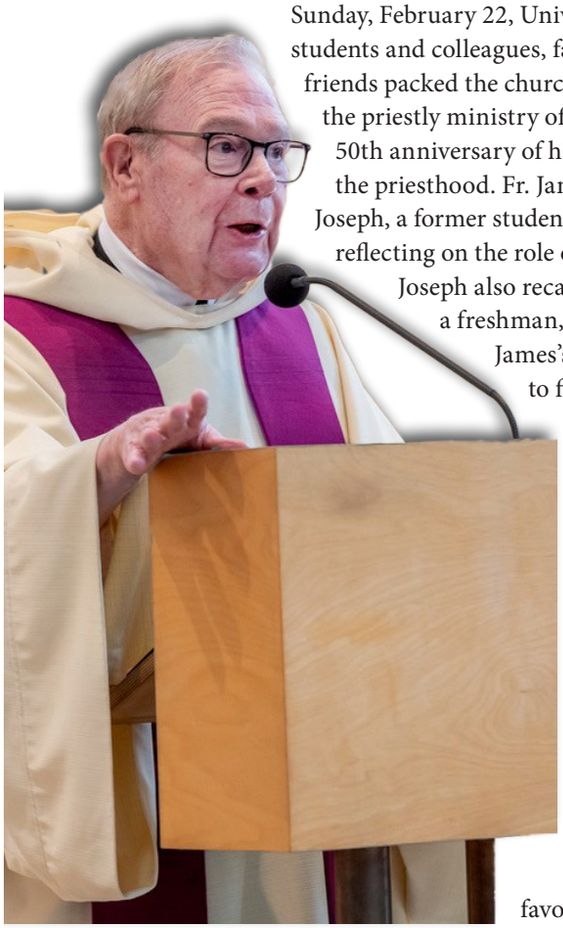
A Letter from the Abbey

Easter 2026

Abbot's Greeting

Fr. Abbot Peter Verhalen, O.Cist.



Sunday, February 22, University of Dallas students and colleagues, family and friends packed the church to celebrate the priestly ministry of Fr. James on the 50th anniversary of his ordination to the priesthood. Fr. James invited Fr. Joseph, a former student, to preach. While reflecting on the role of the priest, Fr. Joseph also recalled how he, as a freshman, had gone to Fr. James's office expecting to find a professor and instead encountered a cloud of cigarette smoke with a monk somewhere inside! Fr. James expressed his gratitude for the 50 years of priestly ministry at the end of Mass.

One of my favorite pictures from the celebration captures Sr. Mary Anne, O.P., the principal of Mary Immaculate School, and a little girl reaching out to hold the hands of Fr. James. The little girl, I suspect, did not really know Fr. James but recognized in him an adult like Sr. Mary Anne vowed to take care of her in the name of Christ. She will come to understand and receive the sacraments, perhaps she will even take one of the philosophy classes Fr. James taught, but right now she joins all of us in celebrating Fr. James and all our priests who have dedicated their lives sustaining the presence of Christ in this world. Please plan to join us May 3 and July 12, when we celebrate the anniversaries of Fr. Robert and Fr. Julius.

Above: Fr. James and Sr. Mary Anne greet a faithful friend after his 50th anniversary mass.

A Sisters' Visit

Fr. Ignatius Peacher

In late December, four Cistercian nuns visited us here in Dallas. Sisters Zita, Judith, and Henriette are from the Cistercian Abbey in Kismaros, Hungary, while Sr. Diane is from the Cistercian Abbey in Boulaur, France.

Together with several monks, the nuns attended SEEK26 at the Gaylord Texan, where some 5,000 college-aged men and woman prayed, worshipped, and attended conferences. Fr. John and Sr. Diane spoke to a packed conference hall about healthy friendships between men and women. As Sr. Diane pointed out, "It is unthinkable that a world framed only by men or only by women could be good."

One evening was dedicated to music. Sr. Judith played the harp, Sr. Diane taught the monks to sing a Latin hymn in four-part harmony, and Fr. Francis and Br. Gideon joined the sisters on guitar.

Abbey Expansion

Construction is on track! Framing crews have raised the new 10-bedroom wing and the kitchen. Work across the site is progressing smoothly and on schedule, keeping us on target to move in this summer. Every beam and wall brings us one step closer to welcoming new brothers into this expanded cloister!

We rejoice in the abundance of vocations our heavenly Father is sending!

To contribute to the Monastic Fund for the support and education of our young monks as well as for the care of our elderly monks, use the QR code below, visit our website, or send a check to Our Lady of Dallas Cistercian Abbey (3550 Cistercian Rd., Irving, TX, 75039)

Is God Calling You?

If you are interested in talking with the vocation director or visiting the Abbey, email Fr John Bayer at fr-john@cistercian.org.

Keeping up with the Young Monks

Br. Barnabas Robertson, 30 — College Station, TX — Entered in 2021
B.S., Physics (Wheaton, 2016); M.S., Physics (Texas A&M, 2021)
Physics Teacher (Form VIII), Guest Master, Studying for an M.Th., Theology at the Univ. of Dallas

Br. Kolbe Novey, 28 — Sheridan, IL — Entered in 2023
B.A., Politics (Univ. of Dallas, 2019)
Form I Latin Teacher, Novice Latin Teacher, Cellarer, Cantor, Studying for an M.Th., Theology at the Univ. of Dallas

Br. Nathaniel May, 26 — Vine Grove, KY — Entered in 2023
B.A. in Liberal Arts (Thomas Aquinas College, 2021)
Form II ELab Teacher
Sacristan, Studying for an M.A. in Theology at the Univ. of Dallas

Br. Jerome Clark, 35 — Torrence, CA — Entered in 2024
B.S., Electrical Engineering (UCLA, 2012)
Form III Latin Teacher
Cantor, Studying for an M.A. in Theology at the Univ. of Dallas

Br. Elijah Potter, 30 — Downers Grove, IL — Entered in 2024
B.A., English (Hillsdale College, 2018)
Community service sponsor, Library assistant, taking classes for ordination at the Univ. of Dallas

Br. Anselm Hallers, 28 — Magnolia, TX — Entered in 2024
B.A., English (University of St. Thomas, 2024)
Maintenance at the Abbey, Catechesis at St James, studying Philosophy & Theology at the Univ. of Dallas

Br. Gideon Connor, 24 — Kansas City, KS — Entered in 2024
B.A., History, English Literature, and Classical Languages (Univ. of Dallas, 2024)
Sub-cantor, Abbey Groundskeeper, Car Mechanic, and Middle School Cross Country Coach. Currently pursuing an M.A. in Theology at the Univ. of Dallas

Br. Charbel Salhab, 24 — Dallas, TX — Entered in 2024
CPS Class of 2020
B.A., Chemistry (Texas A&M, 2024)
Form I Religion Teacher, studying Philosophy & Theology at the Univ. of Dallas

Br. Michael Kattady, 23 — Dallas, TX — Entered in 2024
CPS Class of 2020
B.A., Economics-Philosophy (Columbia University, 2024)
Form II Religion teacher, Community Service Sponsor, studying Philosophy & Theology at the Univ. of Dallas

Br. Sebastian Kelly, 25 — Seattle, WA — Entered in 2025
B.A., Philosophy (Univ. of Dallas, 2022)
Novice, Confirmation Prep Teacher

Br. Pascal Grave, 25 — Round Rock, TX — Entered in 2025
B.A., Philosophy & Letters (Univ. of Dallas, 2025)
Novice, Confirmation Prep Teacher

Br. David Andrews, 23 — Irving, TX — Entered in 2025
CPS Class of 2021
B.A., Politics (Univ. of Dallas, 2025)
Novice, Confirmation Prep Teacher

A Texan in Hungary

With the encouragement of the monastic community in Dallas, Abbot Peter sent Fr. John back to Europe to continue his mission of discernment and support for the renewal of Cistercian life in Hungary. In the spring, Fr. John will continue serving the Cistercian schools by offering a friendly presence, celebrating the sacraments and speaking about the spiritual life. He will also continue to serve as a vocations director and formator for the young men currently interested in Cistercian life at Zirc. In addition, plans are in progress to open a discernment house next year in Budapest — the "Brenner House" named after Bl. John Brenner. The goal of the house is to welcome young men open to the priesthood and interested in living in an intentional community rooted in common prayer and fellowship as they discern their vocations.

A Hungarian Witness

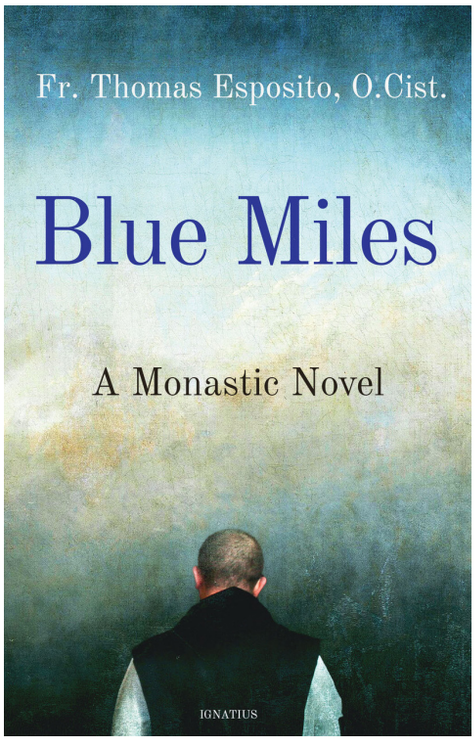
Fr. Joseph Van House

Dr. Tamás Sulyok, President of Hungary, took a goodwill tour of Hungarian emigre communities in the United States this March. As part of it, he stood in the Cistercian Preparatory School lunchroom and said to the gathered crowd of Hungarian Americans:

"I have a personal and special connection to the Cistercians. My uncle was a Cistercian monk. I benefited from the Order's suppression in Hungary, as it gave my uncle more time for the younger members of the family, including me. It was from him, Father Ignác, that I learned the basics of faith, religious knowledge, and much more. His human dignity is still an example to me today. He was always understanding towards other young people and me. He was a caring, open-minded, and loyal teacher. So, through him, I also consider myself a Cistercian student."

Great indeed is the power of Cistercian education! It is gratifying to think that lives squirreled away on rustic land beside the Trinity River can nourish future generations of leaders to serve many, many others. President Sulyok's reminder of the Cistercian gift in his own life is especially moving because it centers on his gratitude not for his (considerable) secular competencies or even on the grounding power of familial attachment, but on the way his uncle's presence brought him the light of Christ, the true guide to life and the revelation of the meaning of all things. It is, after all, for the love of God and the salvation of humanity, not for worldly respect, that we pursue Christ in monastic life and holy orders. Every person God sends us, whether a first former or a novice brother or a congregant at Sunday mass, is a unique and unrepeatable microcosm of divine creation, a whole living world suffused with love and dignity from Our Father above. Every time someone comes back to tell us that we have had a hand in their rescue or blessing, it is a wondrous gift of the Holy Spirit.

As we approach the annual celebration of the central events of God's redeeming love, may the example of Father Ignác, who in hard times brought faith and heart and strength for the future to his young relatives, inspire us all to live well Christ's call.



Fr. Thomas invites you into a fictional immersion in the life of ongoing conversion which is the monastery. Monks have always been a gloriously strange lot, and the monastic vocation attracts people who are quirky, grumpy, often hilarious, and uniquely sensitive to the alluring mystery of God. As the life of Padre Samuel shows, monks strive, through the rigors of community life and the conquering of the "old man" inclined to selfishness, to become saints. Available at Ignatius Press and Amazon.

Our Lady of Dallas Cistercian Abbey

3550 Cistercian Road

Irving, Texas 75039

UPCOMING EVENTS

Fr. Robert 50th Anniversary
Sunday May 3rd 9:00 a.m.

Fr. Julius 65th Anniversary
Sunday July 12th 10:30 a.m.

DAILY SCHEDULE

Morning Prayer - 6:00 a.m.
Adoration - 5:30 p.m.
Evening Prayer - 6:00 p.m.
Daily Mass - 6:35 a.m.
Mass on Sunday - 9:00 a.m.

Holy Thursday, 2025